

NEWS RELEASE

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Department of Health Reminds North Dakotans About Ways to Reduce the Spread of Influenza

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health today reminded residents about the steps to take to avoid contracting or spreading influenza, including the H1N1 influenza virus or swine flu, according to State Epidemiologist Kirby Kruger.

To date, no cases of H1N1 influenza have been reported in North Dakota.

“Health officials at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have indicated the illness caused by this current strain of H1N1 influenza virus appears to be similar to seasonal influenza,” Kruger said. “However, they also said it’s important we don’t let our guard down because the virus still is spreading. In addition, because it’s a new virus, we don’t know if it will cause more severe illness in the future. That’s why we are encouraging people to continue to take steps to avoid spreading the flu.”

The Department of Health encourages North Dakotans to take these steps to reduce the spread of influenza, including H1N1:

- Stay home while you are ill.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and throw the tissue away.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with your hands.
- Avoid crowded public places, if possible.

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“We’ve all probably seen people on the news wearing facemasks in public places to protect themselves against influenza,” Kruger said. “However, how effectively facemasks may prevent disease in public settings is not clear to scientists and medical researchers. That’s why people should not rely on the use of facemasks alone to protect against H1N1 or any flu. The best and most effective way to protect against the H1N1 influenza virus is to follow standard personal precautions as during any flu season.”

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has issued the following recommendations for wearing facemasks in areas with confirmed cases of H1N1 influenza virus infection:

- People who are ill at home can wear a mask to help protect other people in the household.
- People who are ill and need to go out to receive health care should wear a mask.
- People who share a home with people who are ill with H1N1 should wear a mask when they go out in public.
- People who are not ill and want to protect themselves while in crowded public areas may choose to wear a mask.

For more information, visit www.ndhealth.gov or call the North Dakota Department of Health at 701.328.2387.

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